

CHAPTER II

PLANS OF CAMPAIGN : POSSIBLE AND IMPOSSIBLE

THE first consideration to be taken into account in estimating the chances of the next great war is the change which has been brought about by the improvement in fire-arms and in the constitution of modern armies. These changes have all tended to the advantage of the defensive and against the attacking force. Previous wars under the old conditions had led to a conviction of the superiority of attack. The new conditions which will prevail in the future have reversed this opinion. Alike in the equipment of troops and in the system of fortifications, the changes have operated in favour of the defence.

The total numbers of fighting men effective for war in 1896 with their artillery were as follows :

	Thousands of men.		Artillery.
In Germany . . .	2550	...	4552
„ Austria-Hungary .	1304	...	2696
„ Italy . . .	1281	...	1764
Together	5135	...	9012
„ France . . .	2554	...	7320
„ Russia . . .	2800	...	4952
Together	5354	...	12,272

Detailed calculations lead to the following estimate of the probable distribution of the armies which might be placed in both theatres of war, after deducting those forces which would be employed on garrison duty in the interior

of each country, and for the defence of the frontier against sudden intervention by any neutral State.

—	IN THOUSANDS.						
	Germany.	Austria.	Italy.	Total.	Russia.	France.	Total.
In the Russo-Austro-German theatre of war . .	690	979	—	1669	2539	—	2539
In the Franco-German theatre of war .	2035	—	—	2035	—	2126	2126
In the Franco-Italian theatre of war .	—	—	700	700	—	500	500
Total . .	2725	979	700	4404	2539	2626	5165

It is obvious that all these troops could not at once be employed. The campaigns of the past were often begun with from one quarter to one-eighth part of the armies appointed for war. In the future the conditions in this relation will have entirely changed. Speed in mobilisation, as a consequence of the railways constructed specially for strategical purposes, will ensure the rapid concentration of armies at the very frontiers of States, reinforcing the large armed forces maintained there even in times of peace. All this makes it possible for immense armies to meet face to face. And as in every case the attacking side must exceed the defending in numbers, the question as to the disposition of armies near the frontier, and the means of transport of frontier forces to the positions which they must occupy in war, is one of the first importance. But it does not enter into the subject at present under discussion. It will be sufficient here to quote the opinion of one of the first of modern military authorities, the Belgian

General Brialmont. Brialmont estimates that France is in a position to mobilise immediately nineteen army corps, and Germany twenty, each army corps counting forty-five to fifty thousand men. These will constitute the first line of the operating armies. The armies of the second line, according to General Brialmont, will on both sides be formed of more than half a million men.

Estimating thus, General Brialmont concludes that on the theatre of the future Franco-German war the forces of both sides will be almost equal, consisting, roughly speaking, of about 1,500,000 men on each side. In view of the fact that four years have passed since the time of General Brialmont's estimate and that two-years' service has been introduced into Germany, we may take the strength of the army of the second line at a million men. And since owing to the numerical equality of the opposing armies, and to the existence of the present fortifications, the advantage lies with the defending side, serious offensive action by Germany against France could be begun only after sending to the French frontier a great part of the German army. Under such conditions, Germany, of course, could not even think of contemporaneous assault upon Russia. She would be constrained, after allotting portion of her forces for strengthening Austria, to limit her remaining free forces to defensive operations. It is for this reason that we accept the strength of the Austro-Hungarian army against Russia as 1,669,000 as against 2,539,000 on the side of Russia.

An examination of the views of all authorities leads to the conclusion that Germany, having possibilities for more rapid mobilisation and concentration, will aim at successes in the first operations, while France will organise all her obtainable resources with the aim of retrieving the first failures. In order to consider the possibilities arising from this position we found it necessary to consider the conditions under which a new attack by Germany on France or by France on Germany must be begun, and first of all to study the fortifications of the

66 IS WAR NOW IMPOSSIBLE ?

Franco-German frontier, and the probable paths of attack in Germany and France.

From a consideration of these conditions it clearly appears that to pass the newly constructed frontier lines of fortresses is impossible ; and there exists no means of direct invasion of France by Germany except by the attack of fortified positions or the forcing of a path through narrow passages purposely left. These will be defended by forces which, within a short time after mobilisation, if they do not exceed the German armies, will at least equal them.

It is true that the German army will be better than the French, but the estimate we have made shows the difference to be insignificant. The effectiveness of the German army in attack and the French in defence may be thus expressed :

	1st Summons.	2nd Summons.
German . . .	95	80
French . . .	85	72

Let us suppose that the German army will succeed in breaking through the frontier zone of operations and advancing on Paris by the routes indicated by General Brialmont. Having calculated the result of such operations, we come to the conclusion that at that time the French will have available 1,160,000 men, while for the siege of Paris the Germans will have but 520,000 men.

The former German Chancellor, Count Caprivi, a man unquestionably competent in military affairs, on the discussion of the new military law in Parliament, said :

Supposing the French army were beaten, and retreated behind the walls of fortresses, then in order to enclose the present fortifications of Paris we must have at our disposal eighteen army corps, in addition to corresponding reserves. It is very probable that the siege of Paris could now be carried on from one point only, but the example of Sevastopol shows that for this a whole year might be required.

Meanwhile our examination of the conditions in which the besieging army would find itself led us to the conclusion

that if the military strength of Germany proved sufficient for the investment of Paris and the protection of its own rear, even then social and economic conditions would not permit of such operations being carried to an end.

Considering the possibility of an invasion of Germany by the French, it may be concluded that, with the present conditions of mobilisation and concentration of armies, such an invasion is probable only on the supposition that Germany in the beginning of the war limited herself in the west to defensive action, relying on the strength of Metz, Strasbourg, Thionville, and the Rhine fortresses, and sending her offensive resources to the east, calculating on the less rapid mobilisation of the Russian army.

In the opinion of specialists the only possible path by which France can attack Germany lies between Blamont and Longwy, with a movement thence on Mayence. But what tremendous obstacles would have to be overcome at the very first! The French would be obliged to cross, in the face of the German army relying upon the fortresses of Metz and Thionville, the Moselle and the Seille, and, defeating this army, blockade Metz and Strasbourg, take by assault the fortified positions on the Saar and the still stronger positions in the Hartz Mountains, and finally force a passage across the Rhine, about Mayence, Worms, Mannheim, or Speyers. And all this would have to be undertaken by armies which for attack are less efficient than the German.

After considering, from all points of view, the possible invasion of Germany by a French army a million and a half strong, against which Germany would place in the field 600,000 field troops and 600,000 Landsturm, it appears that the investment of Mayence and the forcing of a passage across the Rhine would be impossible. After deducting the losses in battle and on the march, the troops allotted for the investment of fortresses and the guarding of communications, France would have available 350,000 of the field army, whose quality may be expressed by the figure 72, and Germany 350,000 of the field army, whose effectiveness in defence may be expressed by the figure 98,

and in addition a Landsturm whose effectiveness for defence is expressed by the figure 86.

But we assumed that Germany for defence would call up 600,000 Landsturm ; the same supposition applies to France. To complete her forces she would call up 600,000 men of the territorial army, which would be employed in secondary operations. Even with such conditions, which may be taken as very favourable to the French, it is hard to believe that the Rhine could be crossed. But even if the French army succeeded in forcing a passage across that river, after the losses sustained in the passage, and after the investment of Mayence, the French army would contain no more than 590,000 men, who would be opposed by 595,000 Germans, so that the numerical superiority would already be on the side of the Germans.

In addition, Germany would have the Landsturm reserves, in number not less than 1,200,000 men. A part of this force might also be moved to the Rhine, and in such an event the French armies would find themselves in a hopeless position.

In any case, we may safely prophesy a difficult and slow course of military operations, involving great losses, in consequence of the delay of immense forces by the defensive lines and fortifications of the enemy. And with the immensity of armies, and their prolonged stoppages on one spot, the difficulty of provisioning appears insuperable.

The losses from wounds, hunger, ordinary ailments, epidemics, and, it may be, even desertion, will cause all the more disorganisation in armies, because the war will disturb the internal life both of Germany and France. To decide whether Germany or France would prove itself stronger and more stable in its economic and social relations is difficult. The statistics of France and Germany show that both these states possess in an almost equal degree elements of endurance against the destructive influences of war. With such conditions, it is difficult to conceive that the statesmen of France or Germany would undertake a war.

Let us turn to the other possible theatre of a great European war and consider the operations of Germany, Austria and Russia. In this theatre also the most notable fact is the great chain of fortresses and defensive lines. As in Russia, so in Germany the attacking army will meet on its path great groups of fortresses and fortified positions, in mutual inter-relationship, and serving as a support for the operations of defensive armies. To invest such fortresses without sanguinary battles would be impossible, to force a passage in spite of them is difficult, while to evade them could only be done after leaving considerable forces behind for the protection of communications.

The alliances concluded between Germany, Austria and Italy on the one hand, and Russia and France on the other, in view of the great differences which exist between the strength and endurance of these states, render possible a great variety of combinations in actual war. In considering a struggle between France, Germany and Italy, plans of military operations are comparatively easy to define. In the case of an Austro-German-Russian war the conditions are much more complex. Here present themselves a greater number of combinations resulting from the vast extent of the theatre of war, and a greater room for initiative, owing to great differences in the period of mobilisation and concentration, but chiefly owing to the totally different social, political, and economic conditions.

The majority of writers assume that Germany would decide at the beginning to strike with all her force at one of her enemies, and having broken down his opposition, would attempt by means of railroads to move her main forces to the other theatre of war.

From this the question arises, to which frontier would she first direct her forces? In order to form a clear idea on this subject it is necessary to take into consideration certain circumstances.

We have given reasons for assuming that the mobilisation and concentration of the German army would be carried through more speedily than that of the French or Russian armies. From this it follows that so far as Russia

is concerned the initiative of action will belong to Germany. The German government, when demanding from the Reichstag credit for the increase of the army—and the Emperor William himself, on every convenient occasion—declared that the reason for demanding from the people such great sacrifices lay in the fact that Germany would be compelled to carry on offensive operations on two frontiers, and that if any other course were adopted German territory might be subjected to an invasion inevitably accompanied by the most terrible disasters for the people. But as it turned out, all the European powers immediately followed in the footsteps of Germany, and the relationship of strength remained unchanged, so that the German-Austro-Italian alliance has not now sufficient preponderance of strength for Germany to carry on serious offensive operations on both frontiers; and, considering the defensive strength of the French and Russian frontiers and also the defensive strength of the German frontier itself, such an attempt would hardly seem rational.

With a division of forces the war would be still more prolonged, yet the immediate interest of Germany is to overthrow as quickly as possible one of its opponents, since Austria and Italy are less capable than she is of enduring the financial and social influences which would be aroused by a prolonged war. In the event of a lengthened campaign one or both of the allies of Germany might be compelled to cease military operations before the objects of the allies were attained. In addition to this, Germany must count upon the fact that her adversaries occupy a strong position for defence, so that the occupation of their defensive lines would demand immense sacrifices.

For such reasons it appears most probable that Germany would direct the greatest number and the best of her troops against one of her adversaries, placing on the other frontiers only such forces as would be required to support Austria against Russia or Italy against France. Other forms of operations on the part of Germany are hard to conceive. Some suppose that the chief strength of Germany will first

be turned against France as more sensitive and less powerful than Russia, and not until she has broken down the opposition of France will she turn on her more dangerous enemy, Russia. Others assume that Germany will take the opposite course, striking first at Russia, the frontiers of which may not be so stubbornly defended as the frontiers of France, in consequence of the greater spaces, the absence of mountains, deep rivers and other obstacles, and also because of the slower mobilisation and concentration of the Russian forces. But what is more important, out of fear that Austria might be crushed at once, Germany may be forced to begin operations first of all against Russia, for the defence of her Western frontier relying upon Metz and the Rhine fortifications and on the diversion created by the Italians. The probability of such initiative is indicated also by the concentration of Germany's greatest forces on the Russian frontier. For Germany would have no need of such a concentration of troops on a frontier in time of peace if she did not intend to act offensively.

In a work published some years ago by Colonel Zolotaref, of the General Staff, devoted to an investigation of the Russian theatre of military operations, the following view is expressed :

Our adversaries will not fail to take advantage of the only superiority which they have over us, that is to say, their more rapid mobilisation and concentration, in order at once to cut off from Russia the western part of the theatre of war, to prevent reinforcement, and in a short time to make themselves masters of that territory. But this object could not be attained until they had succeeded in taking Brest-Litovsk, that important meeting-place of internal communications situated at the entrance to a difficult country. Thus, on the roads leading to Brest-Litovsk we must pay attention, as the most probable lines of operation of an enemy.

We have seen that the armed forces of the Triple and the Dual Alliances may be taken as almost equal, although as far as numbers are concerned some preponderance remains on the side of Russia and France. Adopting the supposition that Germany decides in the beginning of

the war to stand on the defensive against Russia, we must ask ourselves on which of its defensive lines the German army will stand, on its eastern frontier or on the territory of Russia? Major Scheibert,* of the German General Staff, supposes that the war will be begun against Russia as against France by strategical attack, but that after this, offensive operations must be discontinued on one theatre of war, in order, with concentrated forces, to strike a decisive blow at the other enemy. But when attack is discontinued it will be necessary to guarantee the successes gained by extensive fortifications. If this stoppage is made in the Western Provinces of Russia, Major Scheibert thinks that without great trouble the junction-points of roads and railways may be fortified by means of armoured gun carriages which can be speedily furnished from the German dépôts. He further proposes to fortify the occupied Russian territory by crowding the rivers with steamers of small size (*die Flussnetze mit kleinen Dampfern zu bevölkern*), thus protecting the territory occupied by the Germans, helping the study of the locality, and facilitating the manœuvres of troops. He advises the organisation of communications between the different fortified points by lines of railways and steamers. In other words, Major Scheibert advocates the occupation of the kingdom of Poland.

Let us criticise these proposals more closely.

The kingdom of Poland forms a wedge between Prussia and Austria to such a distance that the Russian armies on the frontier may threaten Berlin, and what is more may take in flank Prussian forces sent into Eastern Prussia. But for precisely the same reason, Eastern Prussia forms a wedge between the Baltic Sea and Russian territory, bending round Poland and piercing to the Niemen, which makes it possible for the Germans to threaten the Russian forces in Poland by an advance on Brest and farther in the direction of Moscow, and also to operate directly against the second Russian defensive line of Kovno-

* "Aus der militärischen gesellschaft," Berlin, 1893.

Vilna, evading the first Russian position. In the opinion of the great majority of writers the defensive system of Russian Poland has been brought to perfection. (See map on next page of Russian Defensive System.)

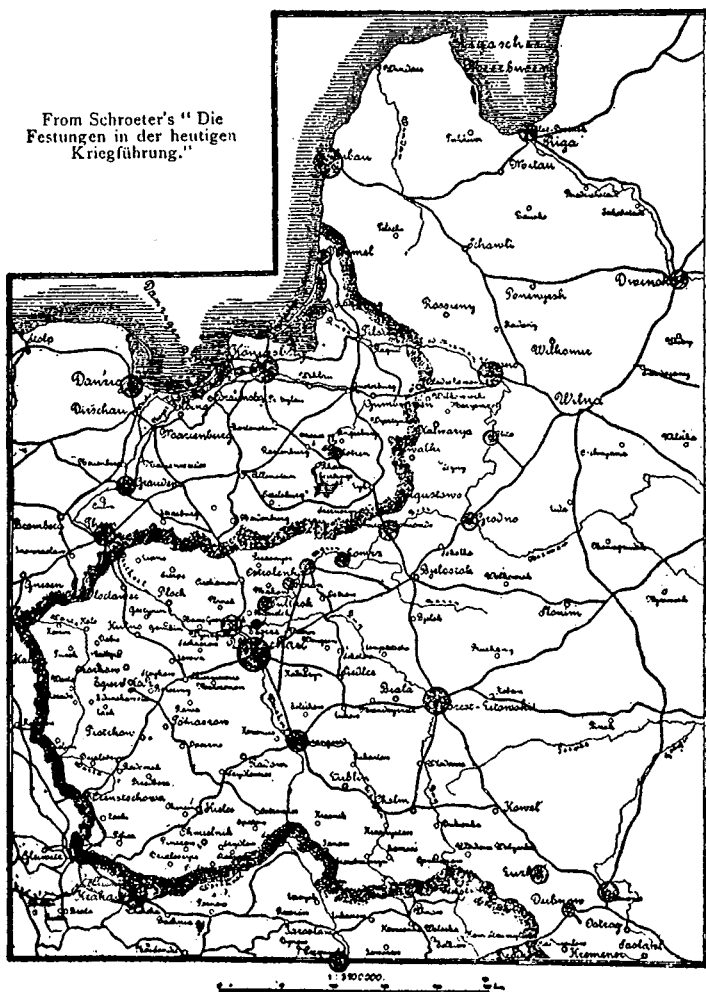
In view of the strength which the Russian armies would present for the defence of the territories between the rivers Vistula, Bug, and Narev, supported by fortified positions on the Narev at Pultusk, Rozhan, Ostrolenka, and Lomza, and the fortresses of Warsaw, Novogeorgievski, and Zegrze, the military writers, Generals Brialmont, Pierron, and other foreign students, and Colonel Zolotaref assume that Germany, if she were to decide at first to turn her chief forces against Russia, would undertake an energetic offensive movement into the depths of Russia through Byelostok, to Brest from the direction of Warsaw, occupying the enemy with fictitious operations in order to cut off the main Russian forces from the other parts of the empire.

In other words, this means to pass the fortifications of the defensive line of the Vistula-Bug-Narev district. Such an undertaking might, of course, be very advantageous for the attacking Austro-German armies, but its execution would be attended with extraordinary dangers. If Germany and Austria could be assured that the Russian armies in this theatre of war were not in a fit state in their turn to make an attack upon vital points in the interior of Germany and Austria, or to cut the lines of communication of the invading armies, then such an attempt might have equal chances of success, and the Russian armies would be compelled to attack the invaders or to retire into the interior of the country. But the threat alone that the Russian armies might invade Silesia and the rich territories lying near the frontier would cause great alarm, acting all the more powerfully on public opinion in Germany since it would be in direct opposition to the declarations of the government and of the Emperor.

The opinion expressed by German writers that their armies would occupy the undefended territory on the left bank of the Vistula, which is at considerable distance from

Map of Russian Defensive System.

From Schroeter's "Die
Festungen in der heutigen
Kriegführung."



the fortresses, is therefore much more probable. In such event the losses which are demanded by attack would fall upon Russia. Further, in the case of the breaking of this line the Russian armies on the German frontier would be met by another defensive line.

Between the German and Austrian armies a junction might be effected by means of the railway leading from the Vistula on the Austrian frontier through Ostrobeta to the Vistula on Prussian territory. On this railway are situated many important towns—among them Lodz with more than 300,000 inhabitants—which might furnish large resources.

In view of convenience for the disposition of their armies, the Germans might usefully employ for the occupation of this line part of their older reserves, consisting of men who would be entirely unfit for field warfare and bivouac life. Nevertheless, in view of the risk of such an undertaking, it is necessary to suppose that the Austro-German armies would attempt primarily to direct their resources on the Vistula-Bug-Narev district, taking only defensive action against France.

After investigating the resources which Germany and Austria would have at their disposal for attack on Russia, the result appears that these powers, after allotting the forces needed for garrisons and for guarantee against France, would dispose of 2,100,000 men. Russia would have available not less than 2,380,000 men.

But of course neither Austria, nor Germany, nor Russia will be in a position to employ such forces at once. From the statistics of foreign authorities it appears that Germany and Austria for immediate attack would have available 900,000 men, Russia at first having available no more than 500,000 men.

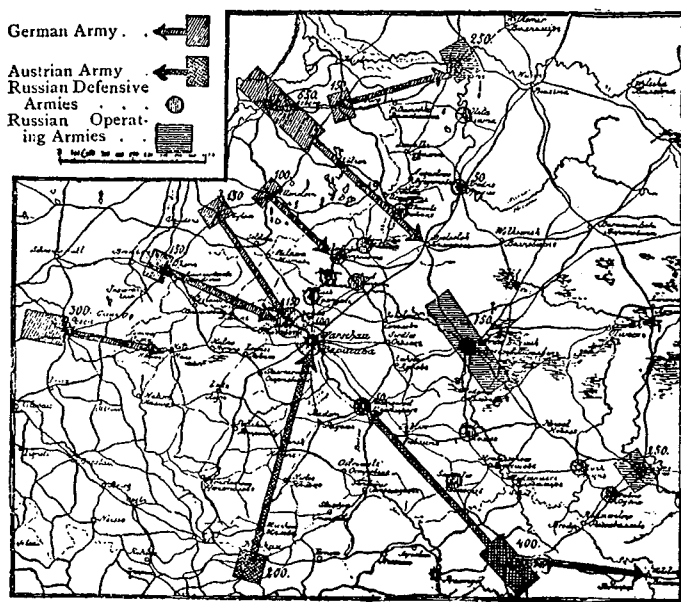
But these figures seem to us untrustworthy. Before the Austro-German armies could penetrate to the Petersburg-Warsaw, the Moscow-Brest, and other railways by which Russian troops might be brought to the front, almost all will have been done to bring the Russian army of the first line up to its full strength.

The German army cannot attack before the Austrians, and therefore as a basis we must take the greatest distance and the longest period needed for mobilisation. In Austria mobilisation and concentration will take place much more slowly than in Germany, and the distances to be traversed will be longer by at least ten days' march. Meantime the Warsaw district includes reserves of 200,000 men, the Vilna district 270,000, and the Kief district 427,000 men. Thus it will be impossible to prevent the strengthening of the Russian armies situated on the Vistula-Niemen theatre of war to a million of men.

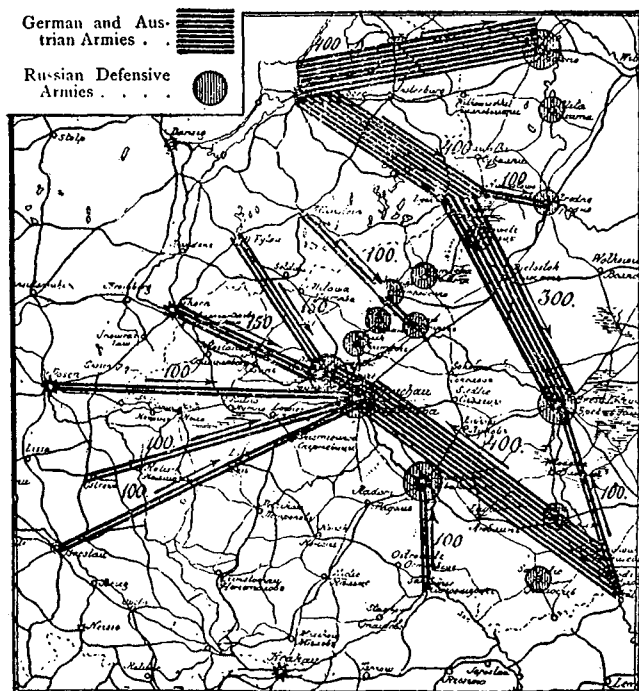
Plans of attack by the allies on the territory watered by the rivers Niemen, Vistula, and Narev have been analysed by the French writer General Pierron, who mentions that in June 1888 he, together with French officers of the General Staff, by order of his government made a tour through the theatre of war above mentioned. From the data collected by General Pierron the probable routes of attack by the Austro-German armies from their points of concentration would appear to be those indicated by the plan opposite. The probable paths of attack by Germany and Austria have also been considered by the Belgian engineer, General Brialmont. By combining the data of Generals Pierron and Brialmont the disposition of the allied armies in their concentric movement on Warsaw and Novogeorgievsk may be presented in the plan on page 78, in which we take as points of departure, not those positions which serve as bases, but those railway stations near which, in all probability, the concentration of the armies will take place. For convenience the routes of the attacking armies are indicated by straight lines, each straight line also representing an army corps of 50,000 men.

There is no doubt that in the Russian territories the attacking Germans and their allies will meet with strong defensive lines, which, if they are inferior in anything to the iron ring of defences constructed in France, nevertheless may be defended even against an enemy twice as strong. These Russian lines of defence include ten

Paths of Advance of the Austro-German Armies from Points of Concentration to the Vistula-Bug-Narev Theatre of War.



Paths of Advance of the German and Austrian Armies on the Vistula-Bug-Narev Theatre of War, from Pierron and Brialmont.



fortresses with fortified camps, situated on rivers, and making the passage of rivers and marshes extremely difficult.

With such conditions the Russian armies supported by internal lines of defence will, with energetic leadership and the known endurance of the Russian soldier, have full possibility of moving to every threatened point preponderating forces, before the junction in superior force of the Austrian and German armies can take place.

The greatest numerical superiority which can be admitted as possible on the Austrian and German side would be at Kovno, 400,000 men, and at Brest, also 400,000 men, against 100,000 defending the first fortress, and 250,000 the second. But Kovno and Brest are both first-class fortresses, and the troops defending them will be in strong positions, of the speedy capture of which the enemy cannot even dream. To their aid will hasten the fresh forces which will be mobilised within Russia, and the besiegers may easily find themselves in a dangerous position.

If Plevna with its improvised fortifications was held for months against an enemy four times stronger, by a garrison deprived of hope of relief, how much longer may such regularly fortified camps as Kovno and Brest hold out when help must come within the fortnight which will be required for the mobilisation of 415,000 men, or, at the worst, of a considerable proportion of that number? When these 415,000 men shall have marched to the relief of Brest and Kovno, the forces of Russia will not only equal those of the allies, but will even find themselves to a certain extent superior.

In addition to this must be borne in mind the difficulty of provisioning an invading army, a million strong, far from its base, while the Russian armies defending their own territory would fight under much better conditions. Even from the point of view most favourable to the Germans—even if they succeeded in taking Ivangorod, Warsaw, and Novogeorgievsk, with all auxiliary fortifications—they would find a tremendous obstacle in Brest-Litovsk alone.

Situated in the midst of a marsh it would be almost impossible to invest it closely, and in no case could it be invested speedily. It is obvious that before Brest could be taken the Russian army garrisoned there would be reinforced by more than 250,000 men. Even supposing, what is still more improbable, that the allies in operations against fortresses and first lines of defence were always victorious, yet such victories would cost them so dear that the stoppage of further operations would seem inevitable.

Estimates as to the probable loss of attacking and defending troops in battle and from disease show that by the time the allies were in a position to undertake operations against the second defensive line—that is, Brest-Litovsk and Kovno—the Russian forces would amount to 440,000 in fortresses, and 375,000 auxiliary forces acting in combination with these garrisons, a total of 815,000 men, to which must be added an army of 1,264,000, newly formed, approaching the scene of operations. The allied powers would dispose of 1,588,000 men. In such event the numerical superiority of the allies over the operating Russian armies would amount to only 773,000 men.

In the face of the Russian armies operating on internal lines and able to change front at discretion, and in face of the reinforcements daily increasing until on the arrival on the scene of action of the whole 1,264,000 of their reserved armies, the Russians would have a numerical superiority of 491,000 men, an advance into the interior of Russia would be an undertaking attended with too great risk. It is, therefore, more probable that the enemy would first invest the fortresses, and only afterwards attempt to defeat the armies of reserves.

In assuming this, we again allow the most favourable supposition for the allies, for this reason, that the losses in battle and in the investment of the fortresses of the second line of defence will be as follows: The 375,000 men of the Russian operating army, acting in combination with the garrisons of the fortresses, will lose a third of

their strength, or 125,000 men ; the losses of the attacking armies will be twice as great, that is, 250,000 men. Further, we assume that only 10 per cent., or, 25,000 men of the Russian army would be able to take refuge in the fortress of Brest-Litovsk, the other 90 per cent., that is, 225,000, being taken prisoners. But even under such circumstances the German-Austrian armies would not have freedom for activity.

From the estimate of General Brialmont we find that for the investment of armies shut up in fortresses, an army of double the strength of the besieged is necessary—that is to say, the position of the Russian and Austro-German armies after the defeat of the operating Russian army, and the investment of the fortresses, would be as follows :

RUSSIAN ARMIES.

Approaching Reserves . . .	1,264,000
In fortresses	465,000

AUSTRO-GERMAN.

Besieging armies	926,000
Free for attack	412,000

These figures show that before the fall of the fortresses there could be no thought of any extensive advance of the allied armies into the interior of Russia. Let us admit, however, the extreme hypothesis that immediate attacks on the fortresses will prove completely successful, and that the Russian armies besieged will be compelled to surrender. Such a success apparently would in no way resemble the surrenders of the French in 1870-71. The capture of the Russian fortresses by assault could only be accomplished after terrible conflicts attended with tremendous losses in the ranks of the attacking armies.

We will suppose—a supposition again the most favourable to the invaders—that the losses of the allies under these circumstances were only half as great as the losses of the Russian armies in battle, that is 232,000 men, with a loss of no more than 10 per cent. from disease. In such

event there would remain only 1,013,000 men in the ranks of the allies against 1,264,000 in the armies of the Russian reserve.

Having gone so far, there are two questions which may well be asked. Having maintained her main forces for such a prolonged time on the Russian theatre of war, would Germany be in a position to defend herself against attack from France, and would the 70,000 men left by the allies for the guarding of Ivangorod, and the 200,000 Austrians left in Galicia be able to withstand the attack of the Russian reserves ?

From the foregoing figures and arguments we must conclude that the plans of attack by Austria and Germany in Russia proposed by foreign military authorities, taking into consideration the immense strength of the fortresses of the Vistula-Bug-Narev theatre of war, and afterwards of the second Russian line of defence, would be impossible to carry into effect.

It is true that another opinion has been expressed as to the possibility of outflanking the Vistula-Bug-Narev positions and even also that of Brest. But such an undertaking would be attended with such extraordinary and obvious dangers that it is unnecessary to consider it here.

Generally, the consequences which would ensue if the German-Austrian armies were to adopt the daring plan of direct movement on Brest-Litovsk in order to cut off the Russian forces in Poland, belong to the category of vexed questions. Plans, of course, are kept scrupulously secret, but some indications nevertheless may be drawn from the opinions current in military circles. First of all it is noteworthy that German officers no longer speak of the project of immediately occupying Warsaw and the whole of Poland, and of fortifying themselves there. But ten years ago, when war with Russia seemed near, this view was so widespread in Prussian military circles that certain officers invited Polish ladies to a dance in Warsaw at the next carnival. The well-known military writer, Scheibert,* expressing the opinion that the Germans must limit them-

* *Op. cit. ante.*

selves to the occupation of Poland, and fortifying themselves there, added that in the West Germany should afterwards confine herself to defensive operations, while her "Eastern neighbour, incited by the independent, premature initiative peculiar to its leaders, would try to gain successes by means of reckless enterprises."

Nowadays, of talk of the occupation of Warsaw there remains not a trace. But it is known that in Königsberg are collected immense stores of sections of bridges and materials for the construction and repair of railways. Apparently, the Germans have realised the delusiveness of an undertaking having as its aim to cut off the Russian armies in Poland, and place them between two fires. Such thoughts correspond to the spirit of self-confidence fostered in German military circles since the great successes of 1870-71, successes which awakened profound faith in the excellence of the German army, and a disposition to depreciate the value of other armies.

Thus the opinion of Scheibert that the Russian commanders will attempt to attain successes by means of daring, ill-considered enterprises, is repeated in Germany to the present day. And, indeed, if the German headquarters staff is convinced that it is capable always, at the right moment, to concentrate its forces, and that the Russian armies will not find themselves in such favourable conditions, it may easily set itself the task of defeating the Russian armies one after another, calculating by such operations to hasten the course of the war, and diminish the economic difficulties from which Germany would suffer. But such an undertaking would be so risky that its initiation would be desired by the most competent authorities in Russia. In war nothing can be calculated upon absolutely, and the strategical development of operations may result in no way so favourably as is relied upon in Berlin and Vienna. In such event the allies would be subjected to defeat.

Without analysing closely the opinions we have quoted, we must ask the question whether with such plans of operations the final objects of war could be accomplished.

All authorities on the war of the future are agreed that in order to force Russia to conclude peace on terms unfavourable to herself, the occupation of Petersburg and Moscow would be required. It is plain that in face of the immense, almost insuperable obstacles which separate both these capitals from the Austro-German base, the allies would not have the resources to advance at once upon Petersburg and Moscow as long as the chief fortified points remained uncaptured and the Russian armies unbeaten, since until these objects were accomplished, too great forces would be needed for the protection of communications.

Thus the allies would be compelled to choose between plans of attack either on Petersburg or on Moscow. To wait for an opportunity, in view of the intact Russian armies, would be impossible for the allies, because the Russian armies in the Vistula-Bug-Narev district would preserve open communications with the southern governments, and the Russian army might undertake a movement against Austria which would destroy the plans of the enemy. The opinions expressed on this subject in military literature lead to the conclusion that if the German government decided on a march into the interior of Russia the aim of the allies would, in all probability, be Moscow and not Petersburg, while the consequences of any such attempt would recall the fate of Napoleon's army, that is to say, it would result in absolute starvation.

For the Germans to limit themselves to the conquest of Poland, as certain authorities advise, and confine themselves to defensive operations is impossible, as such action would give no speedy and final result, and a prolonged war could not be sustained by Germany's allies. In addition, such a decision would expose Germany to great risk. The armies on the Vistula-Bug-Narev theatre of war would be directed against Prussia. It is true that the German frontier is very strongly fortified, and presents topographical conditions very favourable for defence. But the very attempt of the Russian armies to enter upon German territory would undoubtedly cause intense alarm among the German population.

The strength in that district of the Russian army which would be in a position to undertake operations against Germany we have already estimated at 650,000 men. The operations of this army would be directed against Eastern Prussia, in order to cut the communications between Berlin and the bases of attack of the German army in Russia—that is, Königsberg. The invasion of Prussian territory would be facilitated by the nearness of the lines of the Narev and Bug to the Prussian frontier. But it is evident that the Russian armies situated in that district would not be strong enough to strike a decisive blow at Prussia by operations against Berlin itself.

The occupation by the Germans of the left undefended bank of the Vistula in Poland would require separate armies at least as strong as the acting Russian forces. Therefore, at the disposal of the German headquarters staff would be 1,175,000 men ready for further advance into the interior of Russia.

If the fortresses of the Bug did not require investment, then Kovno, Ossovetz, Olita, and Grodno must undoubtedly be invested, for which purpose at least 375,000 men would be required. Thus for advance into the interior of Russia the Germans would only dispose of 800,000 men, a number obviously insufficient for such an undertaking. From this it follows that the Germans will be compelled to await the approach of the Austrians, and to continue their operations in combination with them.

We must bear in mind that the defences of Austria in Galicia are very weak. It is probable that this consideration will not exercise a commanding influence in the choice of plans of operations, for the decisive word will undoubtedly belong to Germany. But for that reason it will be difficult to compel Austria to advance her forces rapidly, she finding herself threatened by an invasion from Russia of her Slavonic provinces. Thus the German staff in all probability will not decide upon invasion of the interior of Russia, but will first of all occupy itself with operations against Olita, Ossovetz, Grodno, and Kovno. Detailed calculations show that after deducting the forces

86 IS WAR NOW IMPOSSIBLE ?

necessary to restrain Russia from active operations against Austria, the latter power would only have 600,000 men free for offensive action against Russia ; thus the attacking forces of the allies may be estimated at 1,400,000 men.

Russia would dispose of armies 2,380,000 strong, which would be distributed as follows :

In the Vistula-Bug-Narev positions	:	650,000
„ Kovno, Grodno, Ossobitz, Olita .	:	250,000
„ Dubno, Kovno, Dutzke	:	200,000
Total		1,100,000

Thus for active operations Russia would possess 1,280,000 men. Of course when the Austro-German armies began operations this force of 1,280,000 might not be concentrated. But as we already explained, long before the enemy could reach Moscow not only this army, but millions more, although with little training, would be ready to oppose the invaders, whose armies, every fifty miles they marched into the interior, would thaw as snow in spring.

In this connection the history of 1812 may perhaps be instructive. In the beginning of action the operating armies consisted of

	400,000 French	...	180,000 Russians
At Smolensk . . .	183,000	„	120,000 „
„ Moscow . . .	134,000	„	130,000 „

As the final result of investigation we must conclude that an advance on Moscow would require at least a two years' campaign, while the more prolonged the war, the better it would prove for Russia. Her immense resources gradually organised would every day be better prepared, and the numerical preponderance would finally pass to Russia, while the allies, weakened by immense losses in battle, and from illness caused by insufficient food, would be forced to close the war without attaining their objects,

in consequence of the absence in the markets of Trans-oceanic and Russian grain, and probably also as a result of internal difficulties caused by the stoppage of work, and by famine.

Some military writers advise that operations against Russia should begin in winter, as the frozen ground would increase the difficulty of constructing earthworks, while the invaders would find greater facilities for transport, both in the sledge paths which replace in winter the bad marshy roads, and in the freezing of the rivers. This last circumstance, in their opinion, almost totally deprives rivers of their immense defensive value.

But the danger of advance into Russia by winter would be still greater for the German army (consisting, as it will, of four-fifths of reserves) than it was for the army of Napoleon, which was, for the most part, composed of veterans.

Such a decision on the part of the German Government is all the less probable because the roads in the frontier districts of Russia are often spoiled by thaws, as was experienced in the wars of 1806-7, and in the Polish campaign of 1831.

Thus after considering all possible combinations it is more than probable that an invasion of Russia would not lead to such results as would accomplish the ends of war. And modern conditions are such that even Russia, in the event of victory, could not attain the best results.

The carrying on by Russia of an offensive war against Germany and Austria after driving the armies of those powers out of her territories, or in the event of those states from the beginning restricting themselves to defence, or limiting their offensive operations to the occupation of certain Russian territories, would be accompanied by great, it may be insuperable difficulties.

Following on the heels of the armies which she had defeated, the Russian armies would be compelled to traverse vast territories entirely exhausted, and to draw all their provisions from an immense distance. The victories already gained would, of course, have cost them dear, and reserves of necessity would predominate

both in the ranks and among the officers. With armies thus constituted success in an offensive war would be much less probable than with armies only completed from the reserve.

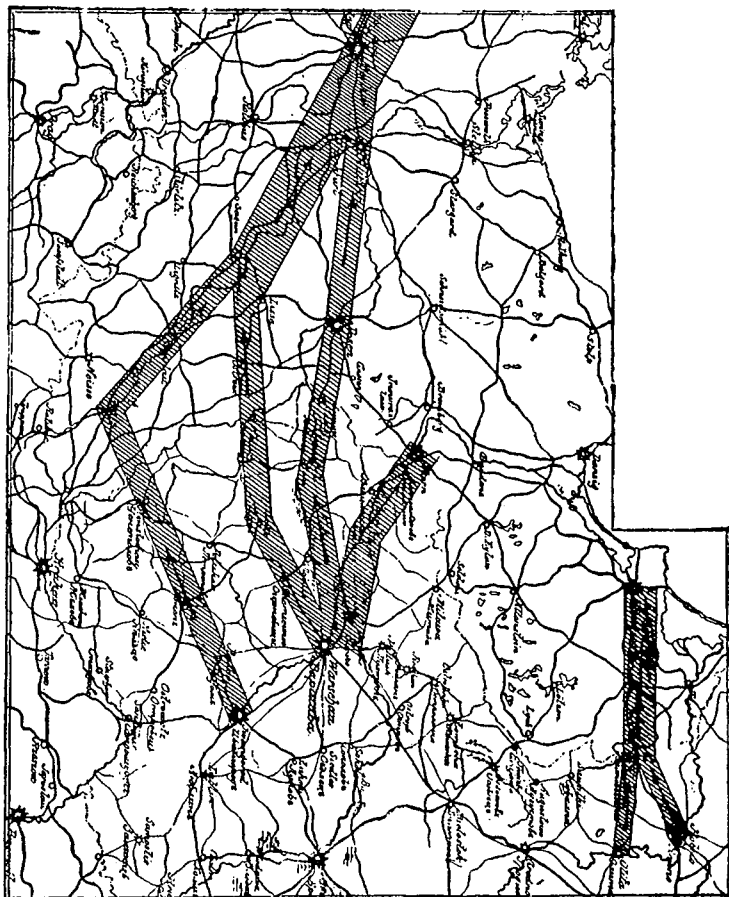
In addition to this, in advancing on German territory the Russian armies would meet with still numerous forces formed, it is true, mainly from the remnants of the attacking armies and from the Landsturm with its reserves, worthless for attack, but fully reliable for defence. As relates to commissariat, transport from the interior of Russia to Prussian territory—not to speak of possible failure of the administration—would require much time and immense outlay. In the war of 1870 the Germans lived at the expense of the enemy. But such favourable circumstances will not be repeated. Rapid advances and the possibility of making requisitions demanding contributions in the face of the present fortified frontiers, smokeless powder, and improved armaments, are inconceivable.

For the invasion, by Russia, of Prussian territory military literature offers several projects. The plan opposite illustrates the scheme of operations which military writers consider most probable

But whatever the direction selected for attack on Prussia, it must be borne in mind that the invaders will be met by a scientific and long-prepared system of defence. Great rivers and fortresses constitute for the Germans a strong defence, while behind them a network of railways, satisfying all the requirements of modern strategy, guarantees the communications of the defending armies with the interior of the country. There will be no difficulty in completing the ranks of the Prussian army, for in addition to the remnants of the invading army the Landsturm with its reserves will be ready.

Thus, to conquer Prussia on her own territory will be no easy task, and the danger she will be subjected to by the occupation by an enemy's forces will be far less serious than the danger which will threaten her from famine. As relates to internal revolutionary movements it can hardly be supposed that the irruption of an enemy on Prussian

Plan of invasion, by Russia, of Prussian territory.



territory would strengthen such a movement. Invasion from Russia would in all probability have entirely different results.

It is necessary to consider one more combination—namely, that Russia, in view of the weakness of the Austrian defence in Galicia, as compared with the defences which exist in the Eastern provinces of Prussia, would restrict herself to defence against Germany, employing her remaining forces for the invasion of Eastern Galicia. But such a combination is improbable. The chief political question lies in the crushing of Germany. Having wasted her strength in a struggle with Austria, Russia would be still less able to force Germany to lay down her arms.

According to General Brialmont two Russian armies might at the same time operate against Austria, one having as its goal Vienna, and the other Buda-Pesth. The consideration of plans of operation in these directions leads to the conclusion that the Russian army would have to overcome immense obstacles, and to march through a country already more or less exhausted.

But even in the event of Russian victory the results obtained would hardly compensate for the war.

For in assuming that Russia were to carry the war into the territory of one of the allies, we must consider the possibility that Germany would return Alsace-Lorraine to France, and that the Government of France might not be in a state to oppose the popular movement in favour of the conclusion of peace. If this were to happen the whole plan of attack, based upon the diversion by France of half the forces of the Triple Alliance, would have to be abandoned.

Thus in all possible combinations a European war in which Russia took part would result in complete exhaustion of both combatants. Nevertheless, estimates of the strength and distribution of armies, the resources for keeping them up to strength, and economic endurance, prove that Russia will be in a condition to sustain a war indefinitely. Even the occupation of one of the Russian

capitals, perhaps of both, would not force her to unconditional surrender. On the other hand, the advance of the Russian armies into Prussia or Austria would not result in any certain success.

Generally, it is difficult to foresee what actual strategical results would issue from this immense struggle, or how it would end. Russia, even with the failure of her arms in some directions, relying upon the immensity of her territories and the approach of an inclement winter, would not be inclined to the conclusion of peace. As for western countries, with the complexity of their economic and social polity, with the mutual interdependence of all the wheels of the internal mechanism, it is difficult to form any idea how a great and prolonged war would react on the economic and social order. It is unquestionable that the fear of those internal agitations which would be awakened by a crisis will have great influence in dissuading governments against undertaking a war.

On the other hand, once war has broken out the conclusion of peace will present great difficulties to any government, either after failure or success. At first it will seem that the results obtained in no way compensate for the sacrifices made, and grave difficulties may present themselves even in the disarmament of masses of men. In the second case—that is, of failure—the stoppage of military operations without attaining the results expected might easily give rise to revolutionary movements. Even in Russia, with all its political fortresses, the war of 1877–78 resulted in a temporary strengthening of the revolutionary propaganda, although that propaganda was carried on by an insignificant proportion of the people.

General plans of operation against possible enemies are elaborated by the General Staffs of all armies. In these plans are unquestionably indicated the resources and time that will be required for the attainment of certain objects. But we may doubt whether in any of such plans the economic conditions have been considered. On more than one occasion we have spoken to M. Burdeau, the

92 IS WAR NOW IMPOSSIBLE ?

French Minister of Marine, a man of the highest capacity, who frankly admitted that when M. Freycinet was Minister of War it was proposed to undertake an inquiry into the economic conditions which would accompany war, but this project had to be abandoned in consequence of the opposition met with in military circles.